

# Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

## Institutes of Higher Education

### FAQs for Administrators

#### Planning and Preparedness

##### How can my college or university prepare for COVID-19 ?

Administrators of colleges and universities should take the following actions to plan and prepare for what to do if a COVID-19 outbreak occurs in your community or school:

- Review and update your emergency operations plan. Focus on components that address infectious disease outbreaks.
- Encourage students and staff to take [everyday preventive actions](#) to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses.
  - Stay home when sick
  - Cover coughs and sneezes
  - Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces
  - Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Monitor and plan for absenteeism.
  - Review the usual absenteeism patterns at your school among both students and staff, so you can identify if the rate of absenteeism increases.
  - Make accommodations (e.g., extended due dates, electronic submission of assignments) for students if they become sick.
  - Plan for alternative coverage by cross-training staff and faculty.
  - Alert local health officials about increases in absences, particularly those that appear due to respiratory illnesses

## What groups should I work with in our community to prepare?

Work with your local health department to develop/update your emergency operations plan and information sharing system. Institutional information systems can be used to get accurate and up-to-date information, and day-to-day reporting on information such as absenteeism or changes in student health center traffic to detect and respond to an outbreak.

## How can our campus health clinic prepare for COVID-19?

Visit CDC's [healthcare facilities page](#) for recommended steps healthcare facilities can take now to prepare for COVID-19.

## What actions can students and staff take to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

Encourage students and staff to take [everyday preventive actions](#) to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses, such as staying home when sick; appropriately covering coughs and sneezes; [cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces](#); and washing hands often with soap and water.

## Does CDC have recommendations for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces?

Routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, countertops) with cleaners that you typically use. Use all cleaning products according to the directions on the label. [Follow CDC's Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations for Communities](#).

## What should we do if a student or staff shows symptoms of COVID-19?

You should establish procedures for students and staff who become sick at school or who arrive at school sick. Sick students, staff, and faculty should be separated from others, given a mask to wear, if available, and sent to their place of residence as soon as possible. Sick residents of on-campus housing should avoid contact with individuals who are healthy.

## What resources does CDC have available to share with faculty, staff, and students?

Share resources with the school community to help them understand COVID-19 and steps they can take to protect themselves:

- CDC [COVID-19 household guidance](#)
- CDC [Make a Kit](#)
- CDC's [health communication resources](#)
- CDC offers several free handwashing resources that include [health promotion materials](#) and information on [proper handwashing technique](#).

## Dismissals

### Should my campus close if there have been COVID-19 cases in my school?

Decisions about school dismissal or cancellation of school events should be made in coordination with your local health officials. Colleges and universities are not expected to make decisions about dismissal and event cancellation in isolation. Dismissal and event cancellation decisions should be considered on a case-by-case basis using information from health officials about the local conditions.

### How long should colleges/universities be dismissed?

The length (duration), geographic scope, and public health objective of school dismissals may be reassessed and changed as the local outbreak situation evolves. Work with your local health officials to determine duration.

## Should we continue teaching and/or research related activities if we decide to dismiss classes?

Yes, consider ways that your college/university can adapt or use alternative teaching methods.

- Review continuity plans, including plans for the continuity of teaching, learning, and research. Implement e-learning plans and distance learning options as feasible and appropriate.
- Ensure continuity plans address how to temporarily postpone, limit, or adapt research-related activities (e.g., study recruitment or participation, access to labs) in a manner that protects the safety of researchers, participants, facilities, and equipment.
- Consider the following approaches:
  - Use of existing infrastructure and services (e.g., Blackboard, Skype, Zoom) to support efficient transition of classes from in-person to distance-based formats. This may include using strategies such as faculty check-ins, recorded class meetings or lectures, and live class meetings.
  - Other student support services such as online library services, print materials available online, phone- or Internet-based counseling support, or study groups enabled through digital media.
- Institutes of higher education should determine, in consultation with their university system:
  - How to convert face-to-face lessons into online lessons and how to train faculty to do so.
  - How to triage technical issues if faced with limited IT support and staff
  - How to deal with the potential lack of students' access to computers and the Internet at home or in temporary housing.

## Should we temporarily cancel extracurricular group activities and large events?

If your community has cases of COVID-19, work with your local public health officials to determine if you should [temporarily cancel events](#).

If you decide to dismiss classes, you should also cancel extracurricular group activities and large events, such as club meetings, performances, social events, athletic team practices, and sporting events. You should also discourage students, staff, and faculty from gathering or socializing anywhere.

## If classes are dismissed, how should we decide when to re-open the campus?

Schools should work with local health officials to assess when students and staff can return to campus.

**What should we do if a student or staff member has recently traveled to an area with COVID-19 or has a family member who has traveled to an area with COVID-19?**